NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5708 APRIL 11, 1978
FRED BROWN/NEW DELHI

PAKISTAN POLITICAL

ANNCR:

IN PAKISTAN, A SPLIT IN THE RANKS OF SUPPORTERS OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER ZULFIKAR ALI BHUTTO APPEARS TO BE WIDENING. VOA'S SOUTH ASIA CORRESPONDENT FRED BROWN DISCUSSES THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE SPLIT IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT:

VOICE:

THE SPLIT IS BETWEEN LEFT-WING MILITANTS BACKING THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER AND A MODERATE RIGHT-WING FACTION HEADED BY THE FORMER RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS MINISTER, MAULANA KAUSAR NIAZI. MISTER NIAZI HAD BEEN RUMORED TO HAVE HAD DIFFERENCES WITH THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER SINCE SHORTLY AFTER MISTER BHUTTO'S OUSTER BY THE MILITARY LAST JULY. MR. NIAZI HAD GENERALLY ARGUED FOR A SOFTER LINE TOWARD MILITARY AUTHORITIES AND HAD COUNSELED AGAINST ACTIONS BY PARTY MILITANTS THAT MIGHT BRING DOWN THEIR WRATH.

THE DISPUTE REACHED A CLIMAX EARLY LAST MONTH WHEN THE ACTING PARTY CHAIRMAN, BHUTTO'S WIFE, BEGUM NUSRAT BHUTTO, SUGGESTED THAT THE BHUTTO'S OUTSPOKEN DAUGHTER BENAZIR SHOULD BE NAMED LEADER OF THE PARTY IF MISSUS BHUTTO HERSELF COULD BE PREVENTED FROM CONTINUING IN THE JOB. MISTER NIAZI COMPLAINED THAT THE PARTY LEADERSHIP SHOULD N O T BE TREATED AS A FAMILY AFFAIR. MISSUS BHUTTO RETALIATED BY ORDERING HIM EXPELLED FROM THE PARTY.

THE ARGUMENT HAS GROWN MORE HEATED SINCE MISTER BHUTTO'S CONVICTION LAST MONTH BY THE LAHORE HIGH COURT OF MURDER CONSPIRACY CHARGES. THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER HAS BEEN SENTENCED TO DEATH ALONG WITH FOUR OF HIS FORMER AIDES. ALL HAVE APPEALED TO THE SUPREME COURT AGAINST THE FINDINGS. LAST WEEK, MISTER

NIAZI ACCUSED MISSUS BHUTTO AND HER MILITANT SUPPORTERS OF PLOTTING A CAMPAIGN OF SUBVERSION AND TERRORISM TO FREE MISTER BHUTTO, EVEN AT THE COST OF PROVOKING CIVIL WAR. HIS ATTACK WAS CARRIED IN THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED PAKISTAN TIMES WHICH SEEMS TO INDICATE IT HAD THE BLESSINGS OF PAKISTAN'S MARTIAL LAW AUTHORITIES. FURTHERMORE, THE NIAZI CHARGES COINCIDED WITH THE ARREST OF ABOUT THREE DOZEN BHUTTO SUPPORTERS ACCUSED OF PLOTTING TO BLOW UP VARIOUS PUBLIC BUILDINGS -- INCLUDING THE LAHORE HIGH COURT. AMONG THOSE ARRESTED WERE SHEIK MOHAMMED RASHID, A FORMER AGRICULTURE MINISTER UNDER MISTER BHUTTO AND A TOP LEADER OF THE MILITANT WING OF THE PARTY. SHEIK RASHID, WHO IS REPORTED TO BE IN POOR HEALTH, WAS ONE OF THE FEW PARTY LEADERS STILL AT LARGE. SEVERAL THOUSAND OTHERS, INCLUDING MISSUS BHUTTO AND BENAZIR, HAD BEEN EITHER JAILED OR UNDER HOUSE ARREST SINCE BEFORE THE VERDICT WAS ANNOUNCED.

SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE SPLIT IN MISTER BHUTTO'S PAKISTAN PEOPLES' PARTY AND THE CHARGES OF SUBVERSION AGAINST BHUTTO SUPPORTERS, ARE TIED-IN WITH EFFORTS TO FORM AN INTERIM NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. PAKISTAN'S MILITARY RULER, GENERAL MOHAMMED ZIA ULHAQ, HAS SUGGESTED THAT SUCH A GOVERNMENT COULD PAVE THE WAY FOR NEW ELECTIONS. ALTHOUGH OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE BEEN LUKEWARM TO THE IDEA, MISTER NIAZI HAS ENTHUSIASTICALLY SUPPORTED IT AND HAS INDICATED HIS WILLINGNESS TO SERVE. IF A NATIONAL GOVERNMENT IS FORMED WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF MISTER NIAZI'S WING, THIS COULD FURTHER WEAKEN THE PARTY, SO THE THEORY GOES, AND MAKE ITS VICTORY IN THE COMING ELECTIONS THAT MUCH LESS LIKELY. SINCE FEAR OF A P.P.P. VICTORY IS WIDELY REGARDED AS THE PRINCIPLE FACTOR HOLDING UP ELECTIONS, OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE INTERIM NATIONAL GOVERNMENT IDEA COULD PROVIDE THE COUNTRY'S MILITARY RULERS WITH A WAY OUT OF THEIR PRESENT DILEMMA OVER WHAT TO DO WITH

MISTER BHUTTO. ONCE THE SMALL POSSIBILITY OF A BHUTTO RETURN TO POWER IS ELIMINATED, SAY THE OBSERVERS, PAKISTANI AUTHORITIES CAN AFFORD TO ADOPT A MORE LENIENT STANCE AND PERHAPS BOW TO THE MANY APPEALS FOR CLEMENCY ON HIS BEHALF.

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